



## STATE OF MICHIGAN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2003  
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### **Jelinek, Shaffer to help seniors receive needed medication**

In an effort to combat escalating prescription drug costs and alleviate hardships for seniors, state Sen. Ron Jelinek, R- Three Oaks, and Rep. Rick Shaffer, R-Three Rivers, today announced a cooperative initiative to provide prescription drug assistance to Cass County seniors.

Jelinek and Shaffer were recently named as advisors to the local task force tackling the issue. Established by Cass County Commissioner Jack Teter, the group aims to create a one-stop resource to assist seniors in getting the medication they need.

"During these tight economic times, it is critical that we do all we can to support our seniors," said Jelinek. "This task force will ensure our vulnerable seniors that they are not forgotten but are valuable citizens in our society."

"Too many seniors are being forced to choose between buying food and buying prescription drugs," said Shaffer, a registered nurse with 25 years of long-term health care administrative experience. "The costs of health care have skyrocketed in recent years. The hardest hit are our seniors, many of whom need large amounts of prescription drugs, lack health coverage and are on fixed incomes. It is time for us to take action on behalf of our area seniors."

The goal of the task force is to develop a prescription drug program to assist the elderly in obtaining their long-term prescription medication at a cost they can afford without affecting their ability to pay for basic necessities such as food, shelter, heat and electricity.

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“One of the most frustrating things for seniors is having to send in multiple sets of applications for each pharmaceutical company and sometimes, each drug,” said Jelinek. “Rep. Shaffer and I will be taking an active role in discussions with drug companies to try to streamline this process.”

Another objective of the task force is creating and mobilizing a group of volunteers to direct seniors to available health care-related resources and assist in filling out and filing the paperwork necessary to obtain prescription drugs.

“The goal is to help seniors get the prescription drugs they need in a timely manner at a cost they can afford,” Shaffer said.

Funding for the program is expected to be obtained through grants. A specific county-wide millage is also being discussed, though not as a first resort.

The task force is composed of many experienced advocates, including: Sue Colley and Tom Bennett, COA; Lynn Kellogg, Area Agency on Aging; Rev. Mattie Roddy, Michigan Senior Advocacy Council; Ruth Andrews, Human Services Coordinating Council; Marian Teter, president, Prudential One Realty, Chris Kadulski, Cass County FIA director; Probate Judge Susan Dobrich; County Board of Commissioners Chairman Johnie Rodebush; County Administrator Terry Proctor; his Administrative Assistant Tara Myer, Chemical Bank Vice President Ilene Toney and Borgess-Lee Memorial Hospital social worker Meri Terbough.

Serving as advisors to the task force will be: Sen. Jelinek, represented by staffer Chris Siebenmark; Rep. Shaffer; Scott Teter, Michigan Attorney General’s office; William Howe, Pfizer government relations director; Jennifer Wrzeskinski, Pfizer executive assistant; and Dr. Jessie Hsieh, Granger, Ind. Family Medicine.

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